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UNCLAS ALGIERS 001702

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF BOUTEFLIKA'S NATIONAL RECONCILIATION
ADDRESS TO THE NATION

REF: ALGIERS 1661

SUMMARY

1. In President Bouteflika's address to the nation August 14, he outlined his vision of national reconciliation and announced that the national reconciliation referendum will take place September 29. National reconciliation will, if the referendum passes, halt legal proceedings and commute sentences for those Algerians, both in country and abroad, who have committed crimes that do not/not include "collective massacres, rapes or attacks with explosives in public places." Additionally, Bouteflika made clear that anyone who has used religion or called for jihad against state institutions (i.e. the leaders of the banned FIS party) will be excluded from participating in political activities. Post will provide analysis and reaction to the address septel. (End Summary.)

REFERENDUM TO HEAL THE NATION

2. Bouteflika said the September 29 referendum will pay tribute and give thanks to the sacrifices and valor of the security forces, especially the National Popular Army as well as pay tribute to the families of those who have been harmed by terrorism. According to Bouteflika, the Civil Concord presented in 1999 "brought positive results," but national reconciliation will bring the country closer to national reconstruction. He underscored that the future of the nation depends on the willingness of the people to vote on this measure which will bring the country forward and, without forgetting the past, leave behind fifteen years of suffering.

KEY POINTS OF REFERENDUM

3. The following are key mandates of the national reconciliation as outlined in the speech:

- Cessation of all legal proceedings for those who have surrendered to the state for the commission of violent acts since January 2000, except for those who have committed collective massacres, rapes, or attacks with explosives in public places. This applies to those living in Algeria, those who fled the country for abroad, and those condemned in absentia who voluntarily present themselves to the authorities.

- Cessation of legal proceedings against people who have supported terrorism, such as in the provision of housing, food, or arms, but did not take part in collective massacres, rapes, or attacks with explosives.

- Commuting of sentences for those have already been condemned for terrorist activities (except for those involving the above mentioned three exceptions).

- Barring from political activity individuals who have used religion as a tool, or have had some responsibility in the conception or establishment of a jihad against the nation and the institutions of Algeria, from any political activity whatsoever.

- Compensation packages will be provided to the families of terrorist victims, including the "disappeared."

- Those who will benefit from the cessation of legal proceedings or who will receive commuted sentences should be welcomed back socially and economically into Algerian society without retribution.

4. Note: The barring from political activity of those who have called for jihad against the state is clearly directed at the former leaders of the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

ERDMAN